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Without Cloak Or Dagger

The Truth About the New Espionage.

By Miles Copeland.

351 pp. New York:

Simon & Schuster. \$8.95.

By MICHAEL BURKE

The C.I.A. seems to have concluded that stonewalling it simply won't wash any longer—not after Watergate. They must now drop a veil a little to quell mounting public apprehension. To that end "Without Cloak or Dagger" is a virtual manual of intelligence technique. It tells all you always wanted to know about spying but didn't know whom to ask. Secret writing is effective. Clandestine radio is safer than commonly supposed. Clandestine penetration of Russia and China is now accomplished with ease. C.I.A. officers engage in a considerable amount of adultery but never pad expense accounts. C.I.A. is now out of the brothel business.

Less definitively but clearly there emerges from Copeland's book the shadow group of elitists who control the C.I.A.—"the old boy net," powerful enough to chew up and spit out an unwanted Director of Central Intelligence, as they did James Schlesinger.

C.I.A. is the devil we don't know. Copeland's aim is to convey a "fundamental understanding" of the Central Intelligence Agency and to correct popular misconceptions. In the process he surfaces the Agency's deepest dilemma, reveals the ominous reach of an operation called Octopus and discloses the C.I.A.'s ambition to become a body as untouchable as the Supreme Court.

The author's credentials are well established. He has been a senior C.I.A. officer and remains an old boy in good standing. His book, then, tells "the truth about intelligence" as a member of the old-boy net sees it. Espionage is but a small part of intelligence, the clandestine dirty tricks part, but apparently it is as ineradicable as the world's oldest profession.

The C.I.A.'s relationships with the F.B.I. are uneasy; civility at the top drops off sharply to hostility. They are combative with Defense, cool with State. But the pure professional camaraderie shared by the C.I.A., the Russian K.G.B. and the British S.I.S. is warm, even cozy. A diplomatic gathering in Beirut, Vienna or La Paz will find senior intelligence officers gravitating toward one another, drawn by some mutual chemistry, chatting easily and ignored by regular diplomats. These are the management types—senior enough to "come out," to operate without the pretense of cover.

If it isn't already, the C.I.A. may soon become the world's most powerful Government agency. Operation Octopus, designed to deal with terrorist groups, is the world's largest repository of personality data. To the C.I.A.'s information, foreign intelligence services have added their own; they fear that, in their own countries, public outcry against this massive invasion of privacy might force destruction of such information.

"As the Agency's power increases, so does the

public's fear of us," one Agency official said. This is the C.I.A.'s dilemma: How to remain powerful, anonymous, secret and at the same time win public confidence. Through Miles Copeland, the old-boy net is saying: We know the enemy; we know how to deal with him; we are incorruptible. Though you don't know us, you can trust us implicitly.

The Agency maintains it demonstrated its incorruptibility by rejecting White House efforts to misuse it in connection with Watergate. It has also demonstrated its fierce sense of autonomy by quickly disposing of Schlesinger.

Although Faith and Trust are usually placed in people, Copeland tells us nothing of the men and women who populate the C.I.A. They are, in truth, just like you and me—except that they live in a strange, private world sealed off from the rest of us by the covert nature of their work. They play by their own rules, hence develop a perspective that tends to distort their view of the overt world. They are at unending war with an enemy—Communism.

Copeland gingerly mentions idealism. In fact there is little room at the C.I.A. for idealism, only pragmatism. And technique.

The old-boy net, the C.I.A.'s first generation, has lived its whole life in a clandestine world. Its defense is impregnable; its instinct for self-preservation tenacious. For its members to tell anyone anything is an unnatural act. To reveal something of themselves and their activities, as the public temper seems to demand, will be a wrenching experience.

Intelligence is a serious piece of the nation's business—too important to be left exclusively to the spooks. ■

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Michael Burke, now president of Madison Square Garden, lived the life in wartime O.S.S., filmed as "Cloak and Dagger."